PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY
Exhibit No. 5
Date 3 15 7015
Bill No. HB 200

## Independent Record

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## News-Media reports on Sex Trafficking Cases involving Montana



Montana Couple Charged With Promoting Springfield Juvenile's Prostitution

JOPLIN, Mo. — A Montana couple arrested in Joplin is accused of using a Springfield juvenile as a prostitute. Joplin G. Venning, 32, and Kourtnie M. Eldridge, 22, both of Billings, Montana, face charges of Promoting Prostitution involving the 14-year-old runaway.

was later hired as office

manager and film coor-

By: Laurie Patton Updated: January 10, 2013, The Joplin Globe



Kalipsell woman accused of prostituting 13-year-old
KALISPELL- A Kalispell woman could face life in prison for forcing a 13-year girl into prostitution in exchange for drugs.

Police arrested 43-year-old Jennifer Johnson Saturday and she's been charged with felony aggravated promotion of prostitution.

Sep 2, 2011 9:28 AM by Laura Wilson (KAJ News)





## Montana Coalition for Safety and Justice P.O. Box 503 Great Falls, Montana 59403 406-205-4658

To: Rep. Randy Pinocci and Fellow Legislators

Subject: HB 200 Reason for PASSAGE- Open Letter

Dear Legislators;

I am writing this letter concerning HB 200 to express my sincere hope that you will look favorably upon this proposal. The opinions expressed in this letter are based on years of working with offenders and their families, low income families and those in crisis.

I support the Bill for the following reasons.

For a family or individual with limited financial resources any drain on their small money bucket has huge consequences and in desperation sometimes leads to criminal acts to feed the drug addiction. They are simply under the control of a hellish addiction.

Unless the underlying addiction is addressed moving an individual or family out of poverty is impossible. Any attempts to improve their financial situation fuels the addiction by making the drugs easier to obtain.

The cost of addictions particularly a Meth addiction is limitless no amount of money given to the addicted individual is going to change the effects on their family, children, loved ones or friends. The addict will do anything to insure their supply, and many times they will commit whatever acts it takes to obtain those drugs. These acts range from simple theft to drug dealing, distrubution, manufacturing and prostitution.

The effects on the children around them and their own kids is heartbreaking, dirty living conditions, hunger, and many times emotional scaring and abuse. This cycle is often repeated with each generation following the path to prison and death. Addicts do not just get better, they need treatment. One round of treatment is generally not enough as there will be relapses and treatment must be available when that happens. The majority of the addicted need a shove, in a non-governmental setting its called an "intervention" but that also presupposes that the individual or family have the financial means to pay for treatment. The majority of addicts are below poverty so an intervention is a fairytale. That leaves the next effective tool; the "shove" something must shove the individual into treatment, sometimes that a jail or prison sentence. This bill is more gentile approach as it offers treatment to those accepting benefits and when required shoves them into treatment which is less expensive in the long run as opposed to lifetime of prison and jail for each generation.

I am not advocating that everyone in poverty got there or is trapped in poverty by addiction issues. Or that being in poverty somehow turns you into a drug crazed monster. Most are there due to circumstances beyond their control and truly work towards moving out of poverty. But there are some that are trapped by addiction and need a strong shove to get the help that they need. Addictions hurt everyone involved, particularly the children.

The first step is identification followed by effective treatment. I can only share my experience of working with individuals who state that without treatment they would be dead. These are moms and dads who now living examples of courage and taking responsibility but each one of them were "shoved" one way or another into a treatment program that changed their lives and their children's lives and the lives of those who work with and care about them.

If you think that this somehow punishes the children by a potential loss of benefits then you need to come and sit with me for a few days as we provide food and clothing, The children and families are not getting the monetary benefits you have allotted. The food assistance goes to drugs, the money may go to rent but don't bet on it, it went to their dealer. You must understand that in an addicts mind the addiction is all consuming, family, kids, financial responsibilities are secondary.

Just as a side note in case family and children are not enough to convince you consider this, the meth in many cases comes to Montana comes from Mexico, from Cartels that terrorize their countries, other drugs come from terrorist linked organizations who use the money to fund their activities.

No Good ever comes from drug addiction, please help us, help them by shoving them into treatment. The families and children will thank you for saving lives.

Steve Cape